

amino acid residue 1 of NS5B, and the C-terminal amino acid residue of X is any one of amino acid residues 531(Lys) to 570 (Arg) of NS5B; and wherein Y is a carboxyl group or an amino acid sequence which is not derived from NS5B; and wherein one or more amino acids in X may be modified, and wherein methionine residues in the amino acid sequence of X may be replaced by selenomethionine residues,

wherein a test compound that is complementary to said active site and/or RNA binding cleft of said polypeptide is a HCV polymerase inhibitor.

31. (Amended) A method for identifying a HCV polymerase inhibitor, which method comprises the steps of:

- (a) performing the method of claim 30; and
- (b) determining a HCV polymerase-inhibitory activity of said HCV polymerase inhibitor.

33. (Amended) A method for identifying a HCV polymerase inhibitor, which method

comprises the steps of:

(a) obtaining a polypeptide which is derived from an NS5B HCV polymerase, has an NS5B HCV polymerase activity, and consists of the amino acid sequence X'-Y, wherein X' is a consecutive amino acid sequence which is a portion of the NS5B, the N-terminal amino acid of X' is a serine residue corresponding to amino acid residue 1 of NS5B, and the C-terminal amino acid residue of X' is any one of amino acid residues 531 (Lys) to 544 (Gln) of NS5B; and wherein Y is a carboxyl group or another amino acid sequence which is not derived from NS5B; and wherein one or more amino acids in X' may be modified, and methionine residues in the amino acid sequence of X' may be replaced by selenomethionine residues;

(b) determining the HCV polymerase activity of said polypeptide by reacting said polypeptide obtained in step (a) with a template RNA and substrates in the presence of a test compound;

(c) determining the HCV polymerase activity of said polypeptide by reacting polypeptide obtained in step (a) with a template RNA and substrates in the absence of said test compound; and,

(d) comparing the HCV polymerase activity determined in step (b) with the HCV polymerase activity determined in step (c),

wherein an activity determined in step (b) that is lower than the HCV polymerase activity determined in step (c) indicates that the test agent is an HCV polymerase inhibitor.